

the accession of Francis II. in 1559, French loyalty, according to another of these ambassadors, Giovanni Michele, was so great that even a weak king could play the arbitrary ruler with impunity. "The French kings are absolute masters of their subjects, who profess not merely a devotee! obedience and a great affection for their prince; they reverence, they adore him. Thus the king may tax their goods, their labour, their lives, all that they have, without fear of revolt. It is as if they were slaves." These ambassadors see things in rather roseate colours, and some of them are great admirers of autocracy. They do not stop to explain the inconsistency between this universal affection for the monarch and the universal misery which they occasionally note. Michele, in fact, celebrates "the devoted obedience and great affection" of the subject for the prince at the very moment that a large number of these same subjects was preparing to dispute the royal will by force of arms! In his opinion, the great liberality of the French kings towards their friends and servants is sufficient to maintain the good relations of master and slave. "The French kings do not practise economy, because they well know that their greatness, their power, their treasures, consist in their liberality towards their friends and servants!" Though the sequel of civil war was to disprove Michele's assurances of the abject servility of the French people, it did not shake the royal pretension to be absolute master of France. "The authority of the king,"³ wrote Girolamo Lippomano in 1577, "is in every sense absolute. Formerly It was limited from time to time. Now, the kings say that they are no longer minors, and they will recognise no other law but their own will."

To see in the religious antagonism to the Church on the part of a handful of heretics in the reign of Francis I. an evidence of disloyalty to the monarch, of treason and sedition, seems, in view of these facts, very far-fetched. A Peasants' War in France in the reign of Francis I, under the inspiration of the new creed, is unthinkable. Sedition went no further than the refusal to submit in matters of faith to an arbitrary will, and it is not easy to see, in this kind of sedition, "conspiracy, rebellion against the State." The crown of Francis I. would have been in no clanger had he refrained from burning